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NC POLICY WATCH

Stories & voices
that **matter**.

Weekly Briefing:

The Trump three-ring circus directly threatens NC Administration lays the groundwork for offshore oil and gas drilling with faux “public hearing”

By [Rob Schofield](#)

There are so many reasons not to introduce offshore oil and gas drilling along the fragile North Carolina coast that it ought not to be even a close call. Unfortunately, despite the overwhelming weight of the evidence and the widespread opposition of the rank and file North Carolinians most likely to be directly impacted by such a scheme, the bizarre three-ring circus that is the administration of President Donald Trump is plowing ahead and laying the groundwork for what could, quite likely, be an economic and environmental disaster of epic proportions.

As Policy Watch Environmental Reporter Lisa Sorg [explained last week](#), the most recent development in this sordid saga was the so-called “public hearing” that Trump administration officials in the Department of Interior’s Bureau of Ocean Energy Management held last week in Raleigh. The particulars of the event provided a classic example of the Trump administration at its plutocratic worst.

Of the hundreds of people who crammed into a public hearing Tuesday on offshore drilling, only a few veered into a small, quiet suite, where they would be served a buffet dinner and waited on by their personal bartender. The American Petroleum Institute, under the guise ‘Keep Exploring North Carolina,’ held a low-key reception for about 20 drilling supporters, most of them decked out in suits or cocktail attire.

The shindig was hosted by API and Thom Goolsby, a former lawmaker from New Hanover County and a longtime advocate for — and beneficiary of — the energy industry. However, Goolsby had no interest in speaking publicly about the cause that he champions.

He escorted Policy Watch from the room, saying, ‘This is a private event.’

Asked if he’d like to talk about offshore drilling, Goolsby replied, ‘Not really.’

But directly across the hall, the 400 or so opponents of offshore drilling who packed into three ballrooms were very interested in discussing it. Many had arrived by bus, from towns along the Outer Banks, Morehead City and Wilmington, because the US Department of Interior had declined to hold a hearing on the coast. So they made the three-hour trip inland, only to find that

the structure of the “hearing” resembled a science fair, and that Bureau of Ocean and Energy Management officials would answer questions, but accept their comments only online.”

Yes, you read that correctly. In a real world scene that bore a striking resemblance to something that one might expect to encounter in a *Saturday Night Live* parody, hundreds of average citizens from the coast were forced to bus all the way to Raleigh – only to be told that they wouldn’t even receive a chance to speak in public. Meanwhile, a small cadre of oil and gas industry apologists milled nearby in a fancy private reception. The only thing that was missing was some sort of official statement from the Trump administration expressing its desire to hear only from “winners” and not to be bothered with the opinions of “losers.” [[Read more...](#)]

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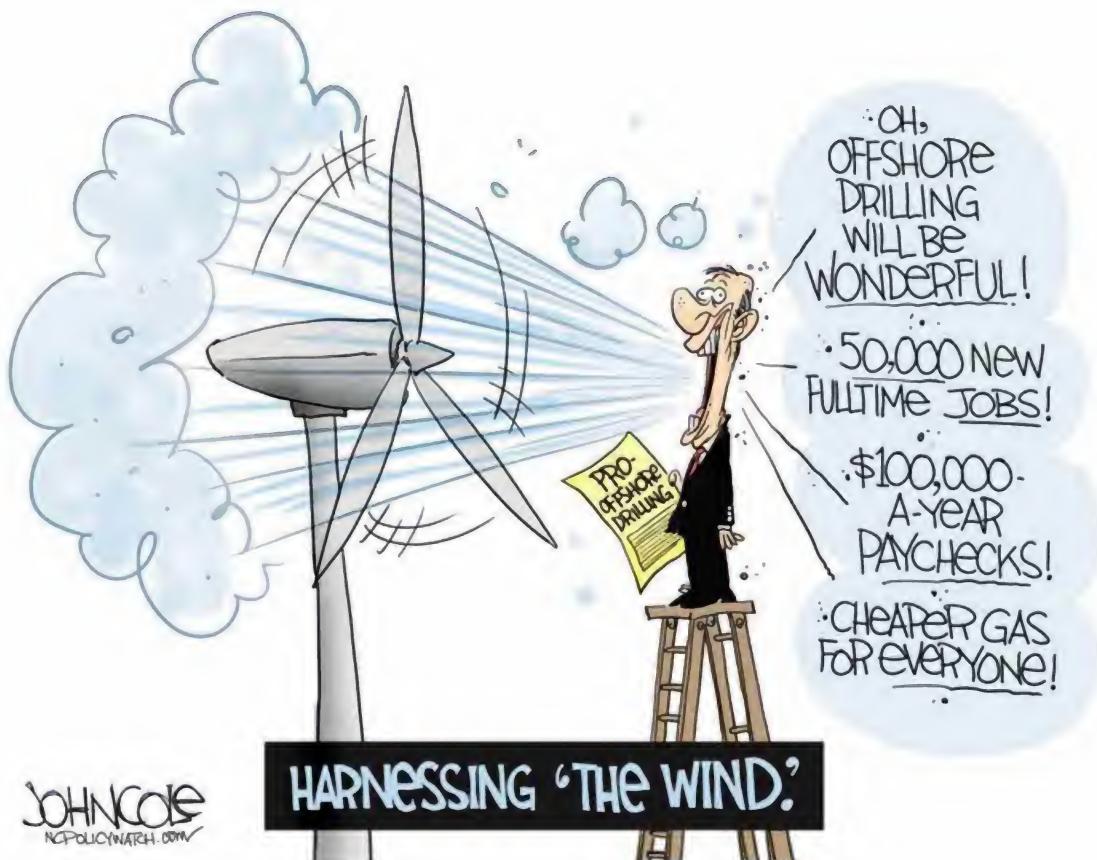
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By John Cole



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